

Should You Ever Tell a Lie?

Angela Bleeker

An important philosophical question in life is “Should you ever tell a lie?”¹ To me, the answer is yes. A lot of people would think “no” because telling a lie is immoral. Yet everyone has told a lie, and sometimes they don’t even know that they’re lying. Yet if they don’t know they’re lying is it really a lie? Whether or not you should tell a lie is determined by this question. If we shouldn’t tell lies, would it count if we didn’t know we were lying? This would mean that everyone would have to know the absolute truth all the time. Let’s say you heard a statement from a friend, and you believe this statement to be true. If the statement was in fact false, you aren’t lying by re-

peating it because you thought you knew the truth. If there was a math problem that you turned in for homework and you thought it was one thing but you were wrong, does that mean you were lying to your teacher? Would your teacher say, “Wrong, you liar!” as a comment on your homework? No, your teacher wouldn’t say that, because you’re not lying. You didn’t know that you weren’t telling the truth. If you’re not telling the truth that doesn’t specifically mean you’re lying.

Imagine this, your friend’s mother dies and only you know about it. If you tell your friend, then she will commit suicide, but if you don’t, your friend will believe you and live on without finding out. You have the choice to tell your friend that her mother is dead, or you could lie to keep your friend alive. Keep in mind that you can’t just “bend the truth” because you know the truth, so if you don’t tell the truth, you would be lying.

If telling a lie meant saving someone’s life would you tell it? Even though it would be telling a lie? I’m pretty sure that if you said no earlier, now you’re saying yes. When you think about it in different points your answer will change back and forth. Sure, maybe telling a lie is immoral to you but it might not be immoral to everyone, and wouldn’t you have more guilt to let someone die than to lie?

We’re back to the question, Should you ever tell a lie? My answer still stands as yes but the true question is would you?

Note

1. The discussion in David White, *Philosophy For Kids: 40 Fun Questions That Help You Wonder About Everything!* (Waco, TX: Prufrock Press, 2001), 27–28, helped shape this reflection.

The Ethics of Genetic Enhancement

Jessica Jacobs

Advances in the study of genetics have pushed technology into the realm of science fiction. As the nature of human genetics is further studied, it becomes increasingly possible that we will soon have the ability to manipulate the genes of our children, not only for the treatment of diseases but also for non-medical advantages. No longer victims of the genetic lottery, tomorrow’s children might be designed to possess desirable qualities such as keener intelligence or more retentive memory. The question then becomes the appropriate place for this new biotechnology in our society. Genetic enhancement will present challenges to our perception of what is “natural” or “normal,” to our view of man’s place in light of our evolutionary history and reli-

gious belief in a higher power, to our assessment of both parental responsibility toward children and civic responsibility toward a just society. But ultimately the value and promise of the technology far outweigh the perceived threats to our society.

Many object to technological advances such as genetic enhancement because of bias toward the status quo. According to the “reversal test” proposed by philosophers Nick Bostrom and Toby Ord, new technology can be viewed without bias by “consider[ing] a change to the same parameter in the opposite direction. If this is also thought to have bad overall consequences, then the onus is on those who reach these conclusions to explain why our position cannot be improved through changes to this parameter.”¹ Under the reversal test, those opposed to the expansion of technology must also acknowledge that previous technological advances were not desirous. If they are incapable of arguing against past advances,

